

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Rojas and members of the Planning and Development Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of H.B. 5541

My name is David Hayes, Vice President of International Association of Firefighters Local 3059 which represents the Firefighters of Thompsonville, Hazardville and Shaker Pines all located within the town of Enfield.

This bill is a change to the special act governing the Thompsonville Fire District. As written it is a compromise that will both address the need for checks and balances that are necessary for fiscal responsibility by any organization funded with taxpayer funds and the mission to seamlessly protect the critical emergency services the Thompsonville Fire District provides to the approximately twelve thousand permanent residents of the District along with the thousands of visitors and employees that travel to and through our jurisdiction on a daily basis.

The bill would afford the taxpayers of the District a referendum vote on any budget which increases more than three percent over the previous fiscal year's amount. While at the same time allowing the District's Fire Department to keep pace with normal increases in costs.

In the recent past zero increase budgets have been voted down affecting both the operational aspects of the Department which the community relies on, as well as the safety and job security of Department personnel. These votes are generally attended by less than one percent of the population of the District. This I believe is not a fair representation of the taxpayers as a whole. The majority by their silence on District matters is an indication they are satisfied with the services and costs associated to provide such service. The firefighters of Thompsonville on a year to year basis have long lived under a cloud of uncertainty with the possibility of layoff or lack of funding to provide a quality service to the residents. So far we have been able counteract the use of the budget as a personal political tool. The firefighters of the Thompsonville Fire District wish to fulfill our mission to the public and support our families without the constant threat to job security, therefore I respectfully ask the members of the committee to support this language change to the special act as presented here today.

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Increasing the number of commissioners from three to five is an obvious move in the right direction in regards to management of the District. This was actually accomplished by the voters of the District this Wednesday March 19<sup>th</sup> at a Special District Meeting. However the language of this bill contradicts the terms of election and re-election that were passed. I would ask the committee to consider review of the language with the sponsor(s) of the bill to address this situation.

The final change to the Act's language would be a move to all day voting to elect commissioners. This would allow more voter input over the current method of only allowing voting during the annual meeting. This was also addressed at the special meeting described above. The language of this bill contradicts the hours of voting that were adopted. I would ask the committee again to consider review of the language with the sponsor(s) of the bill to address this situation. I would also respectfully ask the committee to recommend an amendment to this language to also include all day voting on any budget brought to the voters by referendum. This would ensure more opportunity for input to all voters of the District.

Thank You for the opportunity to comment on this bill

Respectfully submitted March 21<sup>st</sup> 2014 by,

David Hayes

Vice President International Association of Firefighters Local 3059

Cell 508-887-6734 Email [dhayes@hayesracinggroup.com](mailto:dhayes@hayesracinggroup.com)